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WOMAN'S POLITICAL EVOLUTION.

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THE Church tells us that a sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. When the holy sacrament is reached, only the great Oversoul can know all the ministrations of good angels, all the contests with powers of darkness, all the continuous operations of human relations, through which the inward and spiritual grace has been attained.

The student of history learns that a revolution in government is an outward and visible sign of a change in the political conditions of the people. When through revolution a people without a name becomes a state, only the long perspective of history can reveal the action and counter-action of the forces—physical, social, economic, and religious, as well as political—which fling the new flag to the breeze and marshal the new armies of peace and war.

The political economist knows that a so-called revolution in the social order is also a record of changes which have established the activities of new relations and the responsibilities of new alignments.

When society awakes to the realization that the old order is changed, that modes of thought are broadened, that habits of life are relaxed, that new social standards are set up, that new economic forces are dominant, and new political relations are aggressive, it is often forgotten that this social revolution is not the overt and aggregate act of iconoclasts and reformers, but is merely a record of the forces of progress.

This philosophy of development finds conspicuous illustration in the present status—industrial, educational, and political—of the women of the United States.

Society applauds present-day progress, as evidenced by enlarged opportunities of labor, and increased returns for work. It includes women in these favored classes, and enumerates the hundreds of occupations they may and do fill with acceptance to employers and profit to themselves.

Women are everywhere in the industrial world: the cook, the washwoman, the seamstress, the dressmaker, the milliner, and the teacher have been joined by the army of factory women, clerks, shop-girls, stenographers, typewriters, and professional women, so that now there are few business houses of any description where women are wholly absent. Nevertheless, the notion prevails, or at least lies dormant, in the minds of most persons, that men are the breadwinners and women are the sheltered home-keepers. The facts are quite the contrary; at least, the exceptions to the rule are so many that this theory is not a sound basis of economic calculation. In the slums of the great cities the women, as a rule, are the breadwinners; the men live on the labor of the women and children, or contribute little to the family exchequer. In the higher grades of labor and of skilled workmanship there are millions of women who go to their daily toil at the sound of the bell, the shriek of the whistle and the stroke of the clock, with the same regularity and urged by the same necessity as drives the army of men. Labor statistics assert that more than three-quarters of the wage-earning women of the country not only support themselves, but are the mainstay of dependent families. Those acquainted with the thousands of faithful, honorable women in Government service in the City of Washington know this to be true of them. I charge no fault to the men of the families—misfortune and death are no respecters of persons or of sex—I merely chronicle the facts and ask that notice be taken of the wide variance between the theory of woman's industrial condition and the facts in the case.

Women were never idlers. Once they spun the yarn and wove the cloth and made the garments of their families; they sewed with their needles and counted threads in fine embroideries; they milked the cows and made butter with their own hands. On the farm in the North and the plantation in the South, the wife and the mother was the Saint Courageous in sickness, and the Lady Bountiful in calamity, to the little and sometimes isolated community where she was greatest of all because she was servant of

all. The "women folks" economized that the boys might go to the academy in the winter, or possibly to college for a full course, or to the town to learn a trade, or to the city to go into business. Rarely did the daughter of the household go anywhere or do anything to fit herself for an independent individual existence.

How is it now? The few sheep which were kept for the use of individual families have gone to join the great flocks that graze on Western plains and give their fleeces to the buyers of the syndicates which own the land and send its product to the distant market. The spinning wheel has of necessity left its place of usefulness in the family "living room," and now with other bric-a-brac adorns the parlor of the descendant of the gentle Priscilla who sang a psalm and dreamed a dream on the quiet day when John Alden attempted the impossible task of making love for another man.

The factory has superseded the loom and the spinning wheel, and for less money and less labor the family is better clothed than in the olden time. So also with hand sewing and general housekeeping. The sewing machine, and foreigners as servants, have driven away the blessed old days when the mother and the sisters did it all, save, perhaps, the annual or semi-annual help of the visiting seamstress.

The creamery and the cheese factory and the labor of hired men make the former work of women unprofitable, and largely reduce woman's task on the farm. In the West, where farming is conducted on a large scale, immigration has brought foreign women as well as foreign men to do the work formerly done by our mothers and grandmothers.

In the towns and cities modern conveniences have lifted many burdens from woman's shoulders, and steam heating and gas for lighting and cooking have given her hours of time for other duties.

The conclusion reached is therefore irresistible that women by the changed conditions of social and industrial life find themselves removed from the duties their mothers performed; they find themselves thrust by conditions, not of their own choosing, into new relations and under new responsibilities.

There are sheltered nooks along the turbulent stream of modern American life where many women still reverently burn

incense on the old altars of "woman's sphere"; but not less reverent are the women whose ships are in the strong current of independent industrial life, or on the crest of broad culture and wide endeavor. The necessities of self-support and family duty have carried them away from the sheltered shore, or, perhaps, they have heard the cry of those more helpless than themselves, and have sought to better the condition of orphans and widows and overworked shop-girls: the motherliness of soul which prompts to such action is as surely the gift of Heaven and a wealth and glory to the race as is the devotion of the natural mother to her offspring. That mother will follow her child the round world over, her only purpose being to serve and to save. So also the strong-hearted and strong-minded twentieth century woman is morally and mentally compelled by her Puritan heredity and present day environment, and her deep religious conviction, to do with her might what her hands find to do.

Neither are the women of to-day alone in their sometimes questioned departures from old-time exclusive duties. Husbands, brothers, and sons, a splendid nobility of American manhood, rejoicing in the grand achievements of a newly developed country, are with them in the conscious dignity of unchallenged opportunity and power. Men and women are to-day more truly united and on nobler planes of human existence than were those of any other age. Nothing is lost of real gentleness and chivalry, and whole continents of happiness to themselves and to the race are gained through their associated endeavor. Through all evolutions of condition and of progress, Nature is dominant; family affection is the controlling force in woman's nature; with the elevation of the race this force becomes increasingly potent in all human affairs. Woman's industrial condition to-day is the result of the combined forces of progress; this is a justification of the work she is doing and is also related to the broader fact that the industrial conditions of men and women are always and everywhere the foundation and the framework of national character and the soul of political constitutions.

Popular Education.—Next potent among evolutionary forces is popular education. All the children are taught in all grades of schools. Not only do the girls go to school more months in the year than their mothers did, but boys study books longer than did their sires; there is thus introduced into family life an

appetite for general information. Some educators fear for the general good, because the girls are outstripping the boys in number and in quality of application in many schools. It is surely safe to say that co-education has brought the sister to the side of the brother, and the question now is not, how shall the girls be educated, can they bear the strain of higher education, but it is anxiously asked, how can manual training be adapted to the school system so that all the boys may be fitted to earn their living with their hands, and possess the robust manliness of tough muscle and steady nerve. The number of girl graduates from our high schools is much larger than the number of boys, and the proportion of students in our colleges and universities is all the time changing, to the advantage of the women students.

In the half-century between the work of Mary Lyon and Emma Willard—those pioneers of woman's education—and the splendid endowments of the Chicago University, to which women are admitted under no sex limitations, the average American woman has become educationally as well as socially the best type of the world's womanhood, and therefore the best human type of the world's civilization.

The college woman is just a little in advance of the average woman; she beholds the knowledge of all lands and all ages; she absorbs much and becomes not only an educated woman, but holds strong opinions and is moved by deep convictions; she moulds the ideas of men, and greatly influences public sentiment. "Public sentiment" is the atmosphere of community life; it breathes health or it carries disease. Thousands of cultivated strong women every year leave classic halls and take up the work of life in the school room, the office, the store, the shop, or—best of all—the home. Every one of these women is filled with noble desire and heroic purpose; she intends to do her duty everywhere; she will make her way; she does make her way; and society, conscious of her splendid endowments, welcomes her to any place she asks for and can worthily fill.

Woman in Philanthropy.—Slowly, all too slowly for weary limbs and aching hearts, is being evolved the perfected humanity of which the stoic dreamed, the prophet spoke, and which the Gospel of Jesus made possible. Nevertheless the evolution is progressing. Things are better than they were. Woman's presence and influence pervades this evolution.

There were heroic women in colonial days and in the Revolutionary period. There were strong, true women who pioneered in the once new West. There were brave women in the Civil War who followed the armies to the camp and to the field, and were ministering angels to the wounded and dying in the hospitals. There were others who did double duty on the farm, and in the shop, that brothers and husbands might be free for the dreadful business of war. When peace came, the women who had plowed in the field, sewed in the home, washed at the tub, scraped lint and made bandages, and in every way possible to them had met the nation's agony—these same women, having learned the possibilities of their united ministrations outside home walls, took up the organization of missionary and temperance societies, and began reforms of many kinds. They built fountains for the thirsty and planted trees for the weary; they erected hospitals, orphan asylums, retreats in the cities, homes on the hillsides and by the sea, for waifs and overworked shop-girls; they established day nurseries and kindergartens for little children, and helped to endow colleges and universities for young men and women.

If the great philanthropies, established and wholly or in the main part conducted by women, should be destroyed in a day, the air would be filled with the lamentations of the hopeless classes, and society would be shocked with the spectacle.

As the country develops, and the living questions of how its vast areas shall be possessed by industrious, happy people press for settlement, women bring to the solution the discipline of the home, the school, and the philanthropies where the vital questions of production, distribution, and consumption have been studied according to scientific theory and illustrated by practical application.

It is impossible that women shall have carried all these interests on their hearts, and in their activities, and not be well equipped for their application in the broad domain of national economics.

Some of us are deeply concerned in these vital problems of American life. We find ourselves in the midst of conditions which, until recently, were wholly European. Mixed populations in crowded cities, and colonies of foreigners distributed through the country, give rise to apprehension in the minds of intelligent

women. It is not possible, neither would it be right, to attempt the wholesale exclusion of these foreigners. They are the children of the Heavenly Father whom we call "Our Father." Some are of the noblest fibre; they have brought new lustre to the stars and brightness to the stripes of the dear old flag; but masses of others are windfalls of monarchical governments, the garbage of oriental civilizations, and deserters from imperialism and militarism. American women, the daughters of Revolutionary heroes, the daughters, the wives, the sisters of a later generation of heroes, know that all the interests they hold dear are to a degree affected by the political action of these men.

Thoughtful women know that the nation is a grand whole; that if one member suffers, the whole suffers; that if one is blessed, all are blessed. Women have no separate interests; if man is elevated and the general tone of society is purified, woman receives her share of advantages.

The country has made immense strides in material development during the last quarter of a century. Huge commercial enterprises have arisen like giants in armor, and have strode from ocean to ocean, leaving tracks of steel and handprints of light.

The triumphs of mind over matter stamp this period illustrious among the centuries. Within this success there hides danger. The loss of one faculty sharpens others: the blind are sensitive to touch. The cultivation of one set of faculties tends to the disuse of others. Has not the extreme cultivation of the commercial faculties permitted others as essential to national life to be blighted by disuse?

During this evolution, woman's relations to the industrial, the educational, and the philanthropic world, and her pressure toward the political world has been a savor of life unto life. Community life and national life need heart: women have much heart; out of the heart are the issues of life.

Woman in Politics.—The theory prevails that women are not an actual force in American politics. This notion is controverted by the stubborn fact that in all the Northern, and occasionally in the Southern, States women are acknowledged by political leaders to have been an effective, and, in many instances, a controlling element in late national elections and in many local political contests. In the four States of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho women now vote on all questions as fully as

men do, and are equally eligible with men to all offices in the gift of the people. In the State of Kansas women vote at municipal elections; in Iowa tax-paying women vote on questions involving the expenditure of public moneys; in Illinois women vote for Trustees of the State University, and in more than half of the States women vote on the school question. The theory is, women do not vote; the facts are, women do vote on many questions and in many places.

As illustrating how uninformed many intelligent persons are of woman's political status, I may say that a prominent New England politician was quite surprised when told a while ago that the women of Colorado have the full franchise. This most estimable gentleman is a Republican, interested in party success; he had never heard that the women of that State were largely instrumental in redeeming the State from Populism in 1894, and doubtless he has not since heard that a larger proportion of women than of men in that State were loyal to the party of their choice in the political revolution of 1896.

It is not the purpose of this article to make an argument as to the right of women to vote: the abstract right is not questioned by many serious thinkers, and an increasing number believe that the exercise of the right would be a blessing to the home and to the State.

I seek merely to trace in outline the present situation and to show that woman is in politics, and that she is where she is, not by her own distinct volition, but she is part of the great human throng which ever presses on, urged by instinct and led by aspiration toward the sum of human welfare.

Men and women must, therefore, together solve the problems of the twentieth century. These problems are more complex than those presented to any former generation. The statecraft of the fathers was original and great. The constitution they framed has been tried in peace and war and through the reconstruction period; it awaits the crucial tests of present day attacks. The courage of early administrations was equal to their heroic needs. The battles of the Revolution and of the Civil War make brilliant pages in military history. The liberation of three million slaves, and their subsequent acquisition of civil and political rights under the law, form a procession of events unparalleled in the earth's civil achievements. The development of the country's

material resources, so that now all the people are better fed, better clothed, and better housed than the people of any other land under the sun, is the wonder of the world. Mothers in other lands hug their babies with the passion of maternal fondness, and pray God that some good Providence may take them to America, where each one has a chance to make the most of himself. Did any American mother ever pray that her child might find a better country than this? The dearest wish of her heart is that he may rise to the level of his opportunities here.

Every student of the times and of the centuries knows that the crucial test of American institutions is yet to come. Years ago the stern iconoclast of Chelsea wrote :

“Cease to brag to me of America, with its model institutions and constitutions. America will yet have to strain its energies and well nigh break its heart, as the rest of us have had to do, in myriad contest with pythons and mud demons before it is fit habitation for the gods. America will have her agony and her victory, though on other lines than she is quite well aware of.”

This is the agony and the victory which the first decade of the twentieth century will witness. Men and women with experience and consequent power will supplement each the other's quality of ability ; it will require all of every sort.

Economic questions are always most difficult of satisfactory solution because they underlie all other conditions, and because they touch every home. Only patient study of reciprocal relations and the delicate adjustment of service and its just return of benefit can calm the fevered brow of toil and swing the pendulum within the arc of brotherhood and self-interest. Woman's intellectual fibre, her mental tone, is as eminently fitted for this quality of public service as is man's ponderous force for marshalling armies, tunnelling mountains, and building railroads. It is no longer a question of man or of woman, but of quality of service, and of power to meet the world's need.

Woman is coming to the kingdom for this hour. Many popular heresies have been cradled in the home and nursed by women ; but out of the home, and from woman's brain and heart shall come—is already coming—the remedy.

Woman's political power with and without the ballot has, in a few instances, wrought harm to good men and good causes ; it has sometimes, in the name of righteousness, strengthened the enemies of good government. A few women in the supposed in-

terest of woman's cause have defeated men who were opposed to that cause. These instances were phenomenal and temperamental ; they in no wise are chargeable to the woman element in politics. In the main, women have wisely used their influence and discreetly applied their political power. They have been a constructive and not a destructive force.

Each year women are becoming wiser ; they are learning to use their newly discovered influence. He is not an intelligent patriot or a wise politician who ignores this factor in the political equation, or thinks he can place it where he chooses. The present political influence of women is proportionately more intelligent than that of men ; by this I mean that there are so few political emoluments possible to women as a return for political service that they are not tempted to think and act from hope of personal reward. In proportion as political action is intelligent and disinterested, it is independent. The present political influence of woman is intelligent, and should be so dealt with.

To those who tremble at the new order when set forth in bold outline, we say, Be not alarmed ; the order is not so very new, after all. The change has been gradual and natural. No man who commands respect would go back to the old order ; he would not close the schools to girls ; he would not set them to spinning and weaving ; he rejoices in every step by which they have come to their vantage-ground of influence.

When the serious woman sees the perils of the times, when she realizes that her children must march shoulder to shoulder with the children of anarchists, of constitution defamers, and general disrupters of the peace, she sets herself to do all she can in every way to save the country for her children and for her children's children yet unborn. Such a purpose, guided by intelligent comprehension of political relations, past and present, will bring joy and no sorrow to the nation.

The American woman of to-day is born to a glorious inheritance of honor, of education, and of opportunity. She has come into this kingdom to help dispel the clouds of political heresies, which envelope many citizens. She wishes to serve her country as she has served her home. It is the will of Heaven, and she will do it.

J. ELLEN FOSTER.